MacOS 8

Some Good News For Mac Users

By Kevin M. Savetz

When Apple released MacOS 8, the latest version of the Macintosh operating system, Mac users were thrilled. Not just because the latest upgrade to the Mac's system software shipped on time, but because the software is clear evidence that good things can still happen at the beleaguered company. Just days earlier, Apple posted a $40 million dollar loss, and a week before that, CEO Gil Amelio was ousted.

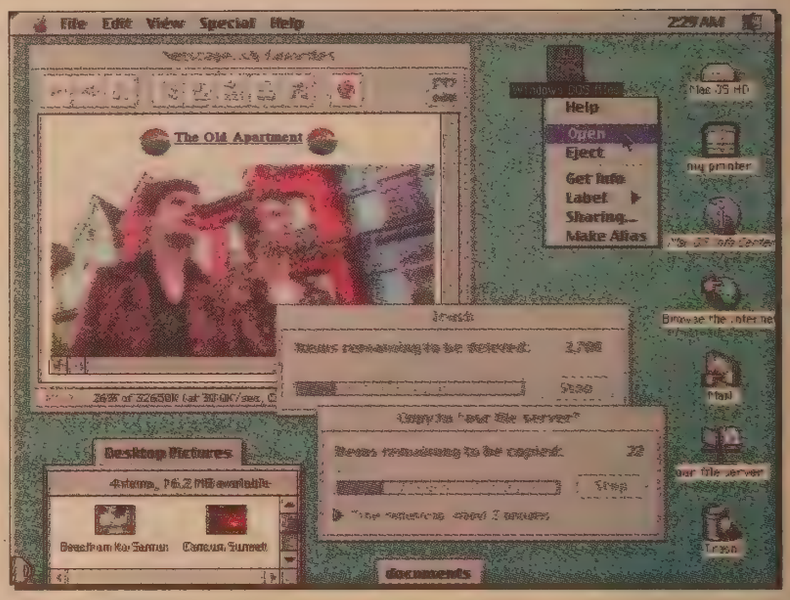
At what might be perceived as a dark time, even by Apple evangelists, MacOS 8 appeared, giving users something undeniably positive to rally around. The software is being heralded as the strongest update to the Mac's operating system in years, with a trove of important interface enhancements. Even software pirates, a group that will typically use any excuse to steal software, erased illegal copies of MacOS 8 from Internet software archives and urged fellow pirates to go out and buy it, for the good of Apple.

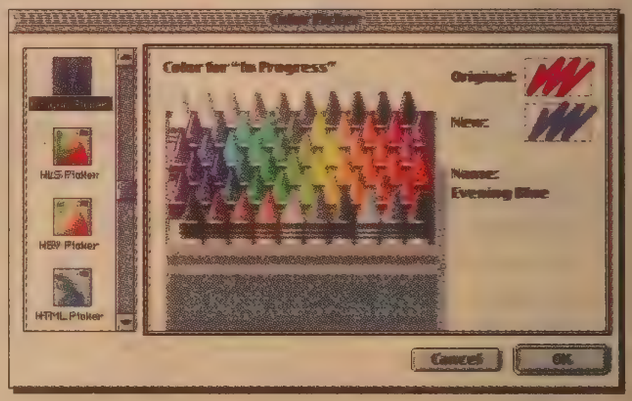
The newest version of MacOS is a step in the right direction, one in a series of Apple's carefully planned steps towards creating the operating system of the future. MacOS 8 includes notable enhancements, and notably lacks some others. Additions include some of the features that were slated for Copland, a next-generation operating system that has since been killed, including more PowerPC-native coding, spring-loaded folders, and a 3-D interface.

New Features

The features it does add will delight most users, even neophytes. The software has plenty of useful new features, but is just one part of an evolution, which is a mixed blessing.

The most noticeable feature of MacOS 8 is the new look, including a "platinum" appearance and reorganization of commands. Another feature is speed—either more or less of it, depending on your perspective. The Finder is "multithreaded" (meaning it can perform multiple tasks at once, such as copying files and emptying the trash). But MacOS 8 isn't a true multitasking operating system—for that, users will have to wait for the next version, code-named Rhapsody and due out next year.





Top: The MacOS 8 desktop showing multitasking; Bottom: Picking colors with "crayons."

The heart of the MacOS interface, the Finder, has been optimized for the PowerPC chip. But not all of MacOS 8 has been made PowerPC-native, meaning some operating system functions still use slower, emulated code. Although the Finder interface is faster, some operations (like copying files) actually take longer than with earlier versions of the operating system—as much as 50% longer.

Other Finder features include the ability to put an image on the Desktop without the need for an extra utility, and a new appearance manager for fine-tuning the system's look.

Viewing files in the Finder is a better experience, thanks to several useful new options. A spiffy shaded list view makes for easier reading, and file dates are displayed relative to today's date (such as "Yesterday, 3:02 PM"). Sticky menus, in which menus lock open with a single click, is a bit disconcerting at first, and a bit too Windows-esque for some tastes. A new view option, Button View, displays the contents of any window with launcher-style one-click but-

tons. Context-sensitive pop-up menus are just a control-click away: For example, if you control-click on a folder icon, a menu appears giving you the choice of trashing it, getting info about it, making an alias of it, changing its file-sharing status and so on.

"Spring-loaded folders" are a welcome (although hard-to-describe) addition, allowing you to access folders-within-folders without all that tedious double-clicking. Just point at a folder and it will spring open; move the cursor away and the window promptly closes again. For neophytes, the Simple Finder option simplifies life a little by eliminating obscure and seldom-used commands from the Finder's menus.

The new operating system serves up a gaggle of other features. An updated version of QuickTime that supports MPEG playback, bug-fixes in Open Transport that protect Mac Internet servers from the "ping of death," and MacLink Plus v9 grace the addition. The color picker (you know, the color wheel available in graphics programs) is more useful—allowing you to specify colors by their HTML or RGB index values—and more fun—allowing you to pick your color from a box of on-screen crayons.

Perhaps more important than what it does do is what it doesn't do (much, anyway): crash. The operating system is very stable, and when things do go awry, there's a better chance that you'll be able to save your work before restarting.

MacOS 8 offers better integration with the Internet, including a Setup Assistant for simplified configuration of Net access, and bundled client software. Netscape Navigator, Microsoft Internet Explorer, Claris Emailer and other clients are included, as well as Apple's own Cyberdog 2.0 Internet tools. The MacOS 8 installation also includes Java, PointCast Network and Marimba's Castanet "push" clients, a hearty collection of Internet tools. The Personal Web Sharing feature makes setting up a quick and dirty Web server a snap for sharing information on an intranet or the Internet.

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System Requirements

MacOS 8 demands more computing power that previous versions. With this release, Apple has stopped supporting Macs that use the 68030 and earlier processors. To run version 8 you need a 68040 or PowerPC machine (a real one—an older machine with an upgrade card won't do), at least 12MB of physical RAM (with virtual memory set to at least 20MB), and mondo disk space: about 65 MB for a minimum install and 130 MB for a complete installation. Those are some hearty system requirements that will leave users of older Macs in the dust. ■

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Business Solutions

The Failure Of Team-Building *continued from page 102*

from subcontractors. In this way, cross-boundary teams are self-forming, without waiting for management to assign people to projects.

Teams involve just the right people at just the right time (not a fixed group for an entire project), since everybody gets precisely the help they need whenever they need it. In other words, teams are not predefined, but rather people join teams for specific periods of time based on the unique needs of each project. In other words, the organization always deploys its talents in the optimal way.

Since everyone knows just what help they need from their subcontractors, everyone automatically plans the most efficient work flows. This approach to teamwork is much more powerful than appointing a few "process owners" who disempower others by telling them how to do their jobs. And it's much more flexible than a single business process for every occasion (as in business process reengineering). The result: processes are dynamic, and tailored to the needs of each project.

When teams form as a result of contracting for specific deliverables, people within the team are clear about their accountabilities. Furthermore, the chain of command is well established since everyone knows who their customer and suppliers are. Thus, there is no confusion about who's in charge. Also, contracting for specific deliverables (rather than just "join my team") makes managing large projects much easier by distributing the project-management responsibilities, since team members manage their own pieces of the project. As a result, teams are self-managing.

The Systematic Leader

Real leaders don't form teams. If they did, they'd be bottlenecks to teamwork.

Real leaders don't cajole people into liking one another or inspire a spirit of cooperation. It's inappropriate to ask people to team when doing so is against their best interests.

Just as road signs can either clearly direct you or lead you the wrong way, organizations either guide people toward high-performance teamwork or create chaos. There are no "silver bullets" that will induce teamwork overnight. All five systems are at work in every organization all of the time. To build effective teamwork, a leader must align personal success with team success in all five systems.

In short, real leaders design teamwork into the fabric of their organizations. ■

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